

**PASTORAL LETTER TO THE VICARS, PRIESTS-IN-CHARGE, CHAPLAINS, LSM REPS AND PARISH WARDENS; ACW CEO; DIOCESAN REGISTRAR**

22 April 2020

**COVID-19 UPDATE ON GUIDELINES FOR THE DIOCESE OF WAIAPU**

On Monday this week the Prime Minister announced plans for New Zealand to move from Level 4 to Level 3 on Monday 27 April at 11:59pm. In response to this planned move to Level 3 I am grateful for the work done by the Diocese of Auckland to produce a template for a reference guide to COVID-19 levels. I have worked with my leadership team and in consultation with parish clergy to develop the attached reference guide to assist the Diocese of Waiapu parishes, ACW services and Diocesan staff teams to navigate the move to all known COVID-19 Levels.

This guide should be read in conjunction with information that is available from the New Zealand Government website regarding COVID-19. <https://covid19.govt.nz>

This guide should also be read with an understanding that the principles that the Prime Minister reminded us of during the announcement yesterday shape our response. Let me remind you of those principles of moving to Level 3.

**The Golden Rules for life at Alert Level 3**

1. **Stay home.** If you are not at work, school, exercising or getting essentials then you must be at home, the same as at Alert Level 4.
2. **Work and learn from home if you can.** We still want the vast majority of people working from home, and children and young people learning from home. At-risk students and staff should also stay at home, and they will be supported to do so. Early learning centres and schools will physically be open for up to Year 10 for families that need them.
3. **Make your business COVID-19 safe.** COVID-19 has spread in workplaces, so the quid pro quo of being able to open is doing it in a way that doesn't spread the virus.
4. **Stay regional.** You can exercise at parks or beaches within your region, but the closer to home the better. Activities must be safe – keep 2 metres away from anybody not in your bubble. Make minimal trips.
5. **Keep your bubble as small as possible.** If you need to, you can expand your bubble a small amount to bring in close family, isolated people or caregivers.
6. **Wash your hands often with soap. Then dry them.** Cough and sneeze into your elbow.
7. **If you are sick, stay at home and quickly seek advice from your GP or Healthline about getting a test.** There is no stigma to COVID-19. We will only be successful if everyone is willing to play their part in finding it wherever it is.

It is my expectation that this guide will help inform decision making at the local parish level and throughout the ACW services and Diocesan staff team. I expect that as we work our way through the different levels that the guide will need to be adapted as more information becomes available about Level 2. We will ensure that any updates to this guide are distributed as promptly as possible.

There may well be questions of clarity that arise for you as you consider the move to Level 3 and even more so looking ahead to a move to Level 2. In many ways the church will not experience much

change as we move to Level 3 as we will all continue to work from home and services will remain online with the exception of some ECEs.

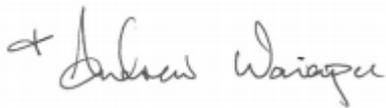
My team and I will be working to provide further clarity about some issues that have come to light for our eventual move to Level 2 and Level 1. I hope that we will be able to address these issues over the coming three weeks in preparation for a possible move to Level 2. To give you an idea about the kind of issues we will seek clarity on for when we move to Level 2, here are a sample:

- Op Shops: A guide for safely operating Op Shops at Level 2 including hygiene, social distancing, and managing volunteers who fall into the 70+ age group.
- Eucharist: Developing a practical guide for the sharing and distribution of Eucharist in a Church setting taking into account hygiene, social distancing and contact issues.
- Conducting a service with social distancing: Practical tools for planning for what social distancing looks like in your parish church.
- Toy Libraries/Pre-school music: A guide for safely cleaning toys or musical instruments used by children in these types of groups.
- Morning tea: A guide to how to safely offer catering at services in the parish, workplace or other places where we gather together.
- Cleaning facilities: A guide to how to clean a facility, e.g. the church, following a service or function to maintain a level of cleanliness approved by the Ministry of Health.

The guide must be read across all sections and it will be important to apply common sense to all situations. The Prime Minister has reminded us that Level 3 demands a high level of trust with one another and I can only imagine that will continue throughout all COVID-19 Levels. For example, while under Level 2 I have made provision for pastoral visits by clergy to people in their homes we must be sensible about the well-being of those being visited as well as those making the visit when making a decision about whether to visit at home.

While Funerals and Weddings are now allowable in a Church with a maximum number of 10 people attending, we also need to take a common sense approach to who conducts those services. If any clergy person feels uncomfortable about leading such a service during this time for any reason, they should contact their Regional Dean and together we will assess the situation with them to see how we might be able to support the family with another priest, or consider alternative options with the family. I expect clergy to take responsibility for their well-being and be confident to let their Regional Deans or me know if they are not comfortable in that setting and to know that we will respect and uphold their decision.

May the risen Christ continue to walk with you and shine a light before your path.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andrew Waiapu". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross-like mark at the beginning.

The Right Reverend Andrew Hedge  
Bishop of Waiapu